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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [NI](#) [HUMANRIGHTS](#)

SUBJECT: SECURITY COOPERATION: OBASANJO EMPHASIZES HUMAN
RIGHTS IN WAR COLLEGE GRADUATION SPEECH

REF: A. STATE 155895

[1](#)B. ABUJA 1330

[1](#)C. ABUJA 1295

[1](#)D. ABUJA 1126

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN CAMPBELL FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (U) President Obasanjo emphasized the importance of military respect for human rights during an August 6 address to the graduating class of the National War College. He termed support for democratic institutions, and respect for human rights, to be a fundamental aspect of professionalizing the Nigerian military, and he noted his administration's dedication to professionalization. Obasanjo said his government has a "zero tolerance" policy towards human rights abuses. Any member of the "military or security services" implicated in human rights abuses would be "held accountable by proper legal authorities." Obasanjo went on to say that the military had a duty to respect human rights and to protect them actively, and he also charged senior officers to ensure that their subordinates did so. Obasanjo's themes were briefly echoed by the Commandant of the National War College, Read Admiral Adedeji, during his remarks.

[1](#)2. (C) COMMENT: President Obasanjo reacted positively to our conversations with his advisors (reftels) regarding all of the steps necessary to re-energize the USG-GON security assistance relationship in the wake of Congressional sanctions imposed following the October 2001 Benue incident. His comments to the National War College graduates were clear and forceful, and were well received by his audience large audience. Among them were the Minister of Defense, senior military officers, GON officials, diplomats and military families. The graduation event also attracted significant media attention. We will monitor print and broadcast media over the next week to gauge public reaction to the speech.

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: The Obasanjo government met the tests set forth in Ref A and did so in almost record time. The GON also went to extraordinary lengths to insure our Mission's presence at the speech. Commandant Adedeji told POLOFF August 4 that he had instructions from Minister of Defense Kwankwaso to personally deliver the invitation to the Ambassador and the Minister phoned the Embassy this morning to insure the Mission would be represented. Clearly, the GON wanted to make certain we, as well as Nigerians, heard Obasanjo's remarks. Obasanjo, and those who promoted this course of action to him, will now expect the USG to move as quickly they did. We urge the Department to take every available step to lift the sanctions against Nigeria and to restore what had previously been a robust security assistance relationship. END COMMENT.
CAMPBELL